

CLAIMS

We Claim:

1. A method for operating a plurality of travel information display boards, said boards comprising structure defining a display board having a first section displaying the identity and locations of lodgings, status indicators associated with each of said lodgings, including at least two illumination conditions for indicating two discrete status levels, a map section on said display board for depicting a road map, said road map displaying the positions of said lodgings with road alert indicators positioned on said display along said roadway depicted on said map section having two illumination levels, means for accessing said display board from a remote location including a programmable computer including memory, an input means, and interface means for interfacing said computer to said indicators, a plurality of telephone lines including a telephone interface coupling said telephone line to said computer, means for recognizing commands issued by a caller on said phone line or by an operator on said input means for changing an illumination condition of a pre-selected lodging or road alert indicator from a first condition to a second condition comprising the steps of:

20 a) storing status information in said computer memory about said lodging and said road alert conditions in a travel condition file;

25 b) receiving updated information about said lodging and road alert conditions;

c) updating said stored status information in said travel condition file based upon said updated information;

30 d) maintaining a display board status file in said computer memory for identifying display boards that have indicator lights whose illumination levels need to be changed based on said updated status information; and

e) contacting said identified display boards to transmit said updated information and change said illumination levels.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of receiving updated information about said lodging and road alert conditions is performed by recognizing commands issued by said caller on said phone line.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of receiving updated information about said lodging and road alert conditions is performed by recognizing commands issued by said operator on said input means.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of contacting said identified display boards is performed automatically at predetermined intervals.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of storing information about operation of said travel display boards in a log file.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of storing information about individual lodging and said roadway in said computer memory for display to said operator.

1. An apparatus for operating a plurality of travel information display boards, said boards comprising structure defining a display board having a first section displaying the identity and locations of lodgings, status indicators associated 5 with each of said lodgings, including at least two illumination conditions for indicating two discrete status levels, a map section on said display board for depicting a road map, said road map displaying the positions of said lodgings with road alert indicators positioned on said display along said roadway depicted 10 on said map section having two illumination levels, means for accessing said display board from a remote location including a programmable computer including memory, an input means, and interface means for interfacing said computer to said indicators, a plurality of telephone lines including a telephone interface 15 coupling said telephone line to said computer, means for recognizing commands issued by a caller on said phone line or by an operator on said input means for changing an illumination condition of a pre-selected lodging or road alert indicator from a first condition to a second condition comprising the steps of: 20 a) means for storing status information in said computer memory about said lodging and said road alert conditions in a travel condition file; b) means for receiving updated information about said lodging and road alert conditions; 25 c) means for updating said stored status information in said travel condition file based upon said updated information; d) means for maintaining a display board status file in said computer memory for identifying display boards that have indicator lights whose illumination levels need to be changed 30 based on said updated status information; and e) means for contacting said identified display boards to transmit said updated information and change said illumination levels.

8. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the means for receiving updated information about said lodging and road alert conditions recognizes commands issued by said caller on said phone line.

9. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the means for receiving updated information about said lodging and road alert conditions recognizes commands issued by said operator on said input means.

10. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the means for contacting said identified display boards contacts said boards automatically at predetermined intervals.

11. The apparatus of claim 7 further comprising means for storing information about operation of said travel display boards in a log file.

12. The method of claim 7 further comprising means for storing information about individual lodging and said roadway in said computer memory for display to said operator.

13. A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions for operating a plurality of travel information display boards, said boards comprising structure defining a display board having a first section displaying the identity and locations of lodgings, status indicators associated with each of said lodgings, including at least two illumination conditions for indicating two discrete status levels, a map section on said display board for depicting a road map, said road map displaying the positions of said lodgings with road alert indicators positioned on said display along said roadway depicted on said map section having two illumination levels, means for accessing

10 said display board from a remote location including a
15 programmable computer including memory, an input means, and
20 interface means for interfacing said computer to said indicators,
25 a plurality of telephone lines including a telephone interface
30 coupling said telephone line to said computer, means for
35 recognizing commands issued by a caller on said phone line or by
40 an operator on said input means for changing an illumination
45 condition of a pre-selected lodging or road alert indicator from
50 a first condition to a second condition comprising the steps of:
55 a) storing status information in said computer memory
60 about said lodging and said road alert conditions in a travel
65 condition file;
70 b) receiving updated information about said lodging and
75 road alert conditions;
80 c) updating said stored status information in said travel
85 condition file based upon said updated information;
90 d) maintaining a display board status file in said
95 computer memory for identifying display boards that have
100 indicator lights whose illumination levels need to be changed
105 based on said updated status information; and
110 e) contacting said identified display boards to transmit
115 said updated information and change said illumination levels.

14. An information display board system, comprising:

a) structure defining a display board having a first section displaying the identity and locations of motels/hotels and other lodgings;

5 b) status indicators associated with each of said hotels/motels or other lodgings, including at least two illumination conditions for indicating two discrete status levels;

10 c) means for accessing said display board from a remote location including:

i) a programmable computer including interface means for interfacing said computer to said indicators;

15 ii) a telephone line including a telephone interface coupling said telephone line to said computer;

20 iii) means for recognizing commands issued by a caller on said phone line for changing an illumination condition of a pre-selected indicator from a first condition to a second condition.

25 d) a second phone line interfaced to said computer via a modem;

30 e) said system being further operative to receive data along said second phone line for changing a hotel/motel and said road alert indicators code file stored within said computer;

f) means for transmitting display board information to a remote location along said second phone line;

35 g) an enunciating device operative to receive signals from said computer when said phone line is active which are translated to audio messages heard by a caller;

40 h) a touch sensitive screen responsive to a user's touch of said screen providing visual information regarding a selected subject area; and,

35 i) means for downloading weather condition data from
an on-line service and displaying said data at said display board
system.